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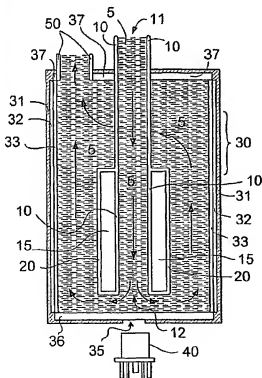
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(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR DISINFECTING WATER USING ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION



(57) Abstract: Ultraviolet radiation is used to disinfect water (5) in a flow tube, where the flow tube (10) sets a fluid filled light guide for the ultraviolet radiation and the ultraviolet radiation propagates through the flow tube via total internal reflection.

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For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

Apparatus for Disinfecting Water Using Ultraviolet Radiation

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Technical Field

This invention relates to a water purification system using intense ultraviolet irradiation to break down chemical bonds in toxic compounds and to de-activate pathogens. The method can also be applied to any mass transport, including the purification of air. These systems can be applied to purify fluids containing naturally occurring toxins or those resulting from biological and chemical agents used in warfare.

Background Art

The first application of an ultra violet (UV) low-pressure mercury vapor discharge lamp to disinfect water was in Marseilles, France in 1901. However, it was not until 1955 that UV disinfection became widely applied in Europe for potable water. In that year UV disinfection equipment was installed in Switzerland, Austria and Norway. Following the discovery of the formation of halogenated hydrocarbons during chlorination, UV disinfection since became popular in most European countries.

US Patent 1,196,481, issued August 29, 1916 described the use of a mercury vapor lamp to generate sufficient ultraviolet light (mostly 254-nm wavelength) to purify water. This basic approach, built upon the UV efficacy of extended-arc continuous-duty mercury based lamps, has been refined over the years, such as in Ellner US Patent 3,182,193 issued May 4, 1965, Maarschalkerweerd US Patent 4,482,809 issued November 13, 1984, Moyher US Patent 5,069,782 issued December 3, 1991, Tiede US Patent 5,393,419 issued February 28, 1995, and Anderson US Patent 6,099,799 issued August 8, 2000. Much of the latter art improved upon aspects related to commercial viability, such as improving UV dosage uniformity through the

use of baffles, UV-transparent coils, and controlled turbulence; increasing
2 UV intensity for higher flow rates by increasing the number of lamps in a
given volume; and improving maintenance through the use of Teflon
4 coatings, wiper mechanisms, and adding turbulence.

Prior art UV water disinfecting systems expose the water to UV
6 radiation such that the radiation passes through the water, strikes a
reflecting surface and then passes through the water after reflection. The
8 reflecting surfaces absorb a significant amount of radiation. There is a long-
felt need to improve the efficiency of such systems.

10 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

My invention is an apparatus and method for disinfecting water, or
12 other fluid, that channels water through one end of a tube and couples
ultraviolet (UV) energy from a high intensity lamp through the tube from the
14 other end. The water, or other fluid, acts like the core of a liquid light pipe,
with an air gap surrounding the tube acting as a low index cladding. The
16 tube itself is constructed of a non-UV-absorbing material, such as UV-grade
fused silica glass. Advantageously, the use of light-pipe technology, which is
18 based on total internal reflection (TIR), ensures that all the input UV radiation
is dissipated in the water. Preferably, the tube is polygonal in cross-section,
20 which is known in the art to maximize light flux uniformity within a light pipe.

Embodiments of my invention with multiple zones efficiently handle a
22 wide range of water absorption coefficients, all at the highest practical
efficiency. In accordance with an aspect of my invention one of three zones
24 is defined by a concentric UV-grade tubing concentrically around only a
portion of the tube through which the water flows and others of these zones
26 are defined between these tubes and the enclosing outer tube.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF DRAWINGS

Brief Description of the Several Views of the Drawing

2 FIG. 1 depicts an apparatus for disinfecting water using ultraviolet
radiation (UV) in accordance with one illustrative embodiment of my
4 invention.

6 FIG. 2 depicts a sectional view of the UV disinfecting apparatus of
FIG. 1.

8 FIG. 3 depicts a light pipe irradiation zone within the UV disinfecting
apparatus of FIG. 1, showing how the ultraviolet radiation is contained using
total internal reflection (TIR).

10 List of Reference Numbers for the Major Elements in the Drawing

12 The following is a list of the major elements in the drawings in
numerical order.

5	fluid (to be disinfected)
14 5	fluid inlet tube
11	entrance end (fluid inlet tube)
16 12	exit end (fluid inlet tube)
13	internal surface (fluid inlet tube)
18 14	external surface (fluid inlet tube)
15	concentric gap (between inlet tube and optical cladding 20 tube)
20	optical cladding tube
22 20	fluid containment vessel
24 21	ultraviolet mirror (fluid containment vessel internal surface)

	32	air gap (fluid containment vessel)
2	33	inner tube (of fluid containment vessel)
	35	ultraviolet inlet aperture
4	36	lower ultraviolet window surface
	37	upper ultraviolet window surface
6	40	high intensity ultraviolet lamp
	50	fluid outlet tube
8	71	first UV light ray (exiting lower ultraviolet window surface)
10	72	second UV light ray (exiting fluid)
	73	third UV light ray (entering fluid inlet tube internal surface)
12		
	74	fourth UV light ray (exiting fluid inlet tube internal surface)
14		
	75	fifth UV light ray (entering fluid)
16	100	light pipe (formed from fluid, fluid inlet tube, and concentric gap)
18	1	incidence angle (refraction at fluid inlet tube internal surface)
20	2	internal reflection angle (reflection at fluid inlet tube external surface)

22 DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Mode(s) for Carrying Out the Invention

24 Referring first to FIG. 1, the basic construction of an ultraviolet (UV)
water disinfecting device in accordance with my invention is shown, including
26 a fluid inlet tube 10 that acts as a central light pipe, an optical cladding tube

20 around the lower portion of fluid inlet tube 10 and defining therewith a
2 concentric gap 15, a fluid containment vessel 30, a fluid outlet tube 50, and a
high intensity UV lamp 40, such as a flashlamp.

4 Referring next to FIG. 2, the fluid containment vessel 30 includes an
internal surface configured as an ultraviolet mirror 31; for example, the fluid
6 containment vessel may be constructed from aluminum and the internal
surface may be polished aluminum. A fluid 5 to be disinfected, such as
8 water, enters the fluid inlet tube 10 through an entrance end 11. The fluid
inlet tube 10 may be manufactured, for example from UV-grade fused silica.

10 The fluid 5 travels through the fluid inlet tube 10 towards the high
intensity UV lamp 40 and exits the fluid inlet tube 10 at the exit end 12. The
12 fluid 5 flow then strikes an ultraviolet (UV) window lower surface 36, which
forms a portion of the lower end of fluid containment vessel 30. Next, the
14 fluid 5 flow is redirected to the fluid outlet tube 50, which is located in the
upper end of the fluid containment vessel 30.

16 The fluid 5 is contained within the fluid containment vessel 30. The
fluid containment vessel 30 includes an inner tube 33, which may be
18 constructed from UV-grade fused silica, contained within an outer aluminum
shell with a reflective interior surface defining a UV mirror 31, with an air gap
20 32 between the outer shell and the inner tube 33. Then ends of the outer
tube 30 are closed off with the lower ultraviolet window surface 36 and an
22 ultraviolet window upper surface 37.

24 The preferred orientation of the ultraviolet (UV) water disinfecting
device is vertical, so that the fluid 5 flow approximates plug-flow, and the
position of the fluid outlet tube 50 is at or near the highest point, allowing for
26 quick and efficient removal of undesirable air bubbles. Air bubbles present
in the fluid 5 can form scattering sites for the UV radiation thereby degrading
28 system efficiency. These UV scattering sites result in UV radiation being
directed at less than optimum angles causing reflections from the fluid

containment vessel internal surface, the ultraviolet mirror 31 that is approximately 86% reflective when composed of aluminum tube. Without these UV scattering sites, the ultraviolet radiation is dissipated mostly within the fluid 5, because all reflections are near loss-less because of the total internal reflection (TIR) operation of a light pipe.

Referring next to FIG. 3, a light pipe 100 region is formed from the fluid 5, such as water, the fluid inlet tube 10, such as a UV-grade fused silica tube, and the concentric gap 15, such as an air gap or a vacuum gap. The concentric gap 15 is hydraulically isolated from the fluid 5, in order to allow the light pipe 100 to operate. Light pipe operation is based on the refractive index of the concentric gap being less than the refractive index of the fluid 5. The refractive indices of fused silica and water in the UV region of the light spectrum are shown in Table 1 below.

Fused Silica UV Grade (SiO ₂)		Water	
Wavelength (nm)	Refractive Index	Wavelength (nm)	Refractive Index
170	1.615	172	1.568
185	1.575	185	1.549
200	1.550	200	1.543
214	1.534	215	1.513
280	1.494	280	1.492
302	1.487	305	1.475
436	1.467	450	1.344
546	1.460	550	1.336
656	1.456	650	1.331

Table 1 - Refractive Indices of Fused Silica and Water

As shown in Table 1, water has about the same refractive index as UV grade Silica glass in the ultraviolet (UV) portion of the light spectrum.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is transmitted from the high intensity ultraviolet lamp 40, passes through the ultraviolet inlet aperture 35, and enters the lower ultraviolet window surface 36 as shown in FIG. 2. A first UV light ray 71 exits lower ultraviolet window surface, is bent by refraction, and enters the fluid 5, defining a second UV light ray 72. The second UV light ray 72 impinges upon the internal surface 13 of the fluid inlet tube 10, which is in contact with the fluid 5, at an incidence angle 1° where incidence angle 1 is measured with reference to the surface normal of internal surface 13. As the second UV light ray 72 enters a sidewall of the fluid inlet tube 10, it is bent by refraction and redirected at a new internal reflection angle 2, defining a third UV light ray 73.

The value of angle 2 is a function of incident angle 1 and the refractive indices of the fluid 5 and the material, such as UV-grade silica, from which the fluid inlet tube 10 is constructed. The third UV light ray 73 continues through the fluid inlet tube 10 material and impinges upon the external surface 14 of the fluid inlet tube that is in contact with the concentric gap 15. The third UV light ray 73 is reflected back into the sidewall of the fluid inlet tube 10, defining a fourth UV light ray 74 when the refractive indices of the fluid inlet tube 10 material and the concentric gap 15 meet certain conditions as defined by Snell's Law. The refractive index of the concentric gap 15 is defined by the material contained in the concentric gap or by the refractive index of a vacuum if no material is contained within the concentric gap 15.

It is a feature of my invention that a light pipe 100 region exists for at least part of the length of the fluid inlet tube 10. Therefore, it is required that the incidence angle 2 be limited to a predetermined range in accordance with the refractive indices of the fluid 5, the material from which the fluid inlet tube 10 is constructed, and the concentric gap 15. In a preferred embodiment of my invention, the fluid inlet tube 10 is constructed from UV-grade silica glass, the fluid 5 to be disinfected is water, and the concentric gap 15 contains a vacuum.

Alternate Embodiments

- 2 Alternate embodiments may be devised without departing from the
spirit or the scope of the invention. For example, the methods described
4 herein can be applied not only to water flow, but also to other fluids that
require purification such as breathable air.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A system to disinfect water using ultraviolet radiation (UV),
said system comprising:
 - (a) a fluid inlet tube (10), for carrying a fluid (5) to be
disinfected, said fluid having a first refractive index, said fluid
inlet tube constructed from a material having a second
refractive index and comprising an entrance end (11), a distally
opposing exit end (12), an internal surface (13) in contact with
said fluid, and an external surface (14);
 - (b) an optical cladding tube (20) disposed around the external
surface of the fluid inlet tube defining a concentric gap (15)
between said fluid inlet tube and said optical cladding tube,
wherein said concentric gap has a third refractive index;
 - (c) a fluid containment vessel (30) around said fluid inlet tube
and said optical cladding tube wherein a portion of said fluid
inlet tube extends from said fluid containment vessel and said
concentric gap is hydraulically isolated from said fluid
containment vessel;
 - (d) an ultraviolet inlet aperture (35) disposed on and forming a
portion of said fluid containment vessel;
 - (e) a high intensity ultraviolet lamp (40) providing ultraviolet
radiation that passes through said ultraviolet inlet aperture and
impinges upon said internal surface of said fluid inlet tube at a
predetermined range of incidence angles;
 - (i) wherein said predetermined range of incidence angles is
limited in accordance with said first, second and third refractive
indices such that the inlet tube acts as a light pipe wherein

substantially all of the ultraviolet radiation is propagated
through said inlet tube via total internal reflection; and

(f) a fluid outlet tube (50) extending from said fluid containment
vessel.

2. The system of claim 1 wherein the concentric gap contains a
vacuum.

3. The system of claim 1 wherein the concentric gap contains a
gas selected from the group consisting of: dry air, nitrogen, and
argon.

4. The system of claim 1 wherein the concentric gap contains a
clear solid selected from the group consisting of: glass,
Plexiglas, and acrylic.

5. The system of claim 1 wherein said fluid to be disinfected is
potable water.

6. The system of claim 1 wherein said fluid to be disinfected is
breathable air.

7. The system of claim 1 wherein said fluid inlet tube and said
optical cladding tube each have a polygonal cross-section.

8. The system of claim 1 wherein a portion of said fluid inlet
tube located within said fluid containment vessel extends past an
end of said optical cladding tube.

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FIG. 1

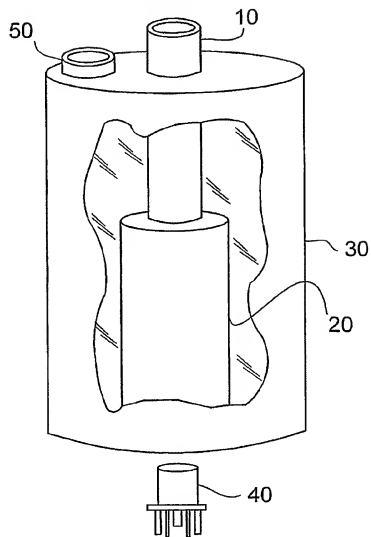
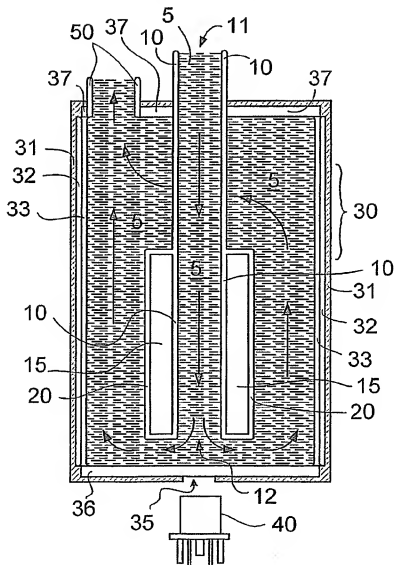
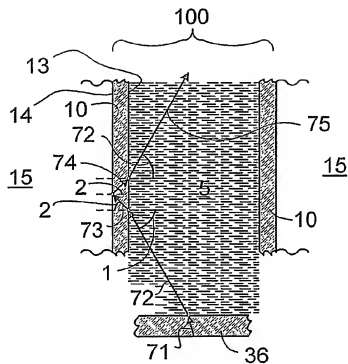


FIG. 2



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FIG. 3



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

In national Application No
PCT/US 02/32759A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 C02F1/32 A61L2/10

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 C02F A61L

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the International search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, WPI Data, PAJ

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	DE 43 07 204 A (UNIV SCHILLER JENA) 15 September 1994 (1994-09-15) the whole document	1-8
A	US 5 413 768 A (STANLEY JR E GLYNN) 9 May 1995 (1995-05-09) the whole document	1-8
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A	WO 99 52566 A (REMOTE SOURCE LIGHTING INT INC) 21 October 1999 (1999-10-21) the whole document	1-8

☐ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- "A" document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
 "E" earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
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- "T" later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
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 "G" document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int'l

ional Application No

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Patent document cited in search report		Publication date		Patent family member(s)		Publication date
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